

of Law, a decision was taken in 1967 that the tenure of licence of M/s. A.H. Wheeler & Co. and M/s. Higginbothams Ltd. would be nine years with effect from 01.01.1967. Tenure of other bookstall licences was fixed as five years. This is in conformity with the provision of article 19(1) (G) of the Constitution of India.

- (d) Does not arise.

Stopping of Shatabdi/Swarn shatabdi Trains at Sirhind

2899. SARDAR GURCHARAN SINGH TOHRA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state

- (a) whether Government have received any memorandum/representation from some Members of Parliament for the stoppage of Shatabdi/Swarn Shatabdi trains at Sirhind railway station in Punjab;
- (b) if so, when the memorandum was received;
- (c) whether any decision has since been taken on the request of MPs; and
- (d) if not, by when a final decision is likely to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir. A joint representation was received from Sardar Gurcharan Singh Tohra and 3 other Members of Parliament.

- (b) It was received on 23.12.1999
- (c) Yes, sir. A letter explaining detailed position has already been sent to Sardar Gurcharan Singh Tohra on 07.02.2000
- (d) Does not arise

Digha-Sonpur Rail Line

†2900. SHRI VIJAY SINGH YADAV: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether a proposal for Digha- Sonpur rail line in Bihar is pending;
- (b) whether any survey for this rail line has been conducted;
- (c) if so, by when the work on this line is likely to be initiated; and

[†]Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) to (d) A work of construction of railway bridge over river Ganga at Patna connecting Patna and Sonpur stations was included in the Budget 1996-97 with the proviso that the work would be taken up after receiving the requisite clearances. The proposed alignment is expected to pass via Dighaghat.

The detailed investigations and final location survey for construction of this rail bridge have been taken up by M/s RITES. Model studies are being done by Uttar Pradesh Irrigation Research Institute, Roorkee and after their completion, the alignment and configuration of the bridge will get finalised. Once the design and alignment of the bridge is finalised, the cost estimates shall be firmed up and the proposal will be processed for requisite clearances. The work would be taken up after these clearances have been received. A provision of Rs. 5 cr. has been kept for this work in the Budget 2000-2001. No target date for completion of the project has yet been fixed.

Improvement of punctuality of north-east bound trains

2901. SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to refer to answer to Unstarred question 1821 given in the Rajya Sabha on 17th December, 1999 and state the action plan to reduce the enumerated Railway causes for improving the punctuality of North-East bound trains?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): The following steps are being taken to reduce the Railway causes for improving the punctuality performance of North-East bound trains

1. Improvement in standards of maintenance to reduce equipment failures and to take remedial measures to avoid recurrence.
2. Provision of corridor blocks over Indian Railways to facilitate integrated maintenance schedule for tracks, over head equipment and signaling equipment to ensure proper maintenance and to avoid failures.
3. Augmenting line capacity to reduce congestion on the main route to Guwahati by converting the existing meter gauge to broad gauge.